

St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Easter greetings from all of us at St. Anthony's! I hope that you found the Easter celebrations as wonderful and joyous as we did in Zuni.

As I mentioned in my last letter, March was a time of preparation and anticipation at St. Anthony's, all of which were realized in meaningful and celebratory realities. Historically, we set dates as "BC" and "AD", however today we are more inclined to use "Pre" and "Post" Covid. To my mind, these last weeks have been a welcome return to "pre-Covid" days with an eye toward tomorrow.

Our Native American Day has always been a day of great significance in the school year when we celebrate our students' identity and ancient inherited traditions. Sadly, the event had to be shelved for the last three years, and so we were determined that it should be resurrected this year. Our students took to the practices with gusto! Zuni language and culture classes, gym and library classes were given over to practice and rehearsal of the intricate Zuni dances. On the day of the special event, still being a little cautious, we restricted the number of visitors in attendance to two family members for each student. However, we did "live-stream" the event with Mike, our maintenance man, on a hydraulic lift 30 feet in the air operating the camera. (As it turned out, over 400 people tuned in!)

For several days before the big event, parents and teachers gathered to create the traditional apparel while students practiced with delight. I persuaded our east Indian Sisters to wear their traditional dress and I, of course, dug out my traditional Scottish kilt. With so much heartfelt enthusiasm, the day could be nothing but a great success. We were not disappointed!



I noticed one student in particular who intensely concentrated on every dance step. I complimented him on this to which he replied, "I always do." "Why not apply that same level of concentration to your studies?" I asked. A look of incredulity came over him, but amazingly, his homeroom teacher has told me that his grades are indeed improving. (An inspired moment I think.)

We soon moved to the end of term and the much-anticipated Spring Break. Since school ended on Wednesday of Holy Week, we had to anticipate Easter just a little. On Tuesday, the fifth graders organized Easter Egg hunts for the smaller children in Kindergarten through the third grade. They prepared bags of candy for the rest of the School, which were a big surprise and distributed amid a great deal of hilarity. I should interrupt my story to explain that while these extracurricular activities were taking place, regular lessons continued unabated. As test results show, the infusion of laughter pays dividends with study.

On Wednesday, we held our "All School Mass" to end the term. At the beginning of Lent, all the students had been given cards and envelopes on which they wrote promises about ways in which they would show "God's goodness" in



their lives. They presented these at the offertory of the Mass. At the end of Mass, we all processed into the garden where I placed the cards in a fire together with a lavish helping of incense. Everyone breathed in the fragrance as his or her prayers and promises rose to the heavens.

Easter Sunday proved to me one of the most delightful that I have experienced. Five of our young students received the Sacrament of Baptism on Easter Sunday morning amid a packed church congregation. At the renewal of baptismal vows, young and old bellowed out "I do!" when I asked if they rejected satan and all his works. Smiles of delight shown forth from the newly baptized as they received their candles from their God-parents and were told to "receive the Light of Christ."

The ladies of the parish had arranged a potluck lunch to follow the Mass and a feast was prepared for all. And the intrepid "Miss B" (a member of the school board) had arranged yet another Easter Egg Hunt. My task was to be the starter for the hunt. I was fortunate to remain standing as dozens of kids (and some not so young) sallied forth, like an army in search of plunder. What a fun day! I did notice that some of the more seasoned hunters shared their prizes with the tiny tots, which to me made the efforts very worthwhile. After the hunt, one of the baptismal candidates handed me a small box. It contained a tiny ceramic bowl that he had made himself and painted with bright vibrant colors. It now has a place among a few trinkets that I brought from Scotland. I could hardly believe that amid all his excitement, the little one thought about me. I hope and pray that the kindness, generosity and thoughtfulness of these children will stay with them throughout their lives. They could change the world!



During Easter Week, we provided accommodations for a group of 20 high school students from south Texas. They came to help out at our neighboring St. Patrick's Church, to complete the renovation of a home near the Church, and to work on repairing the convent roof under the guidance of our maintenance crew. Geared up for their first day of work, we found that the main road was closed because of a serious accident preventing them from getting to St. Patrick's. Undeterred, they set to work around St. Anthony's, helping with painting, grass cutting, weeding and a dozen other jobs. This to me was yet another example of the generosity of young people when given the opportunity and motivation. I am sure that our own students of St. Anthony's will follow suit in their lives.

Easter for me this year has been a "post Covid" time inspired by kindness, generosity and good will. Now we move forward to the end of the first century of St. Anthony's in Zuni -- looking forward to the years ahead. Thank you for making it all possible. Easter Blessings upon you and your family!

Sincerely,

Fr. Patrick McGuire